

Who was ... Medgar Evers?

Medgar Wiley Evers: civil rights activist, first state field secretary of the NAACP in Mississippi

Born: 1925 in Decatur, MS

Died: 1963 in Jackson, MS

Why is he important?

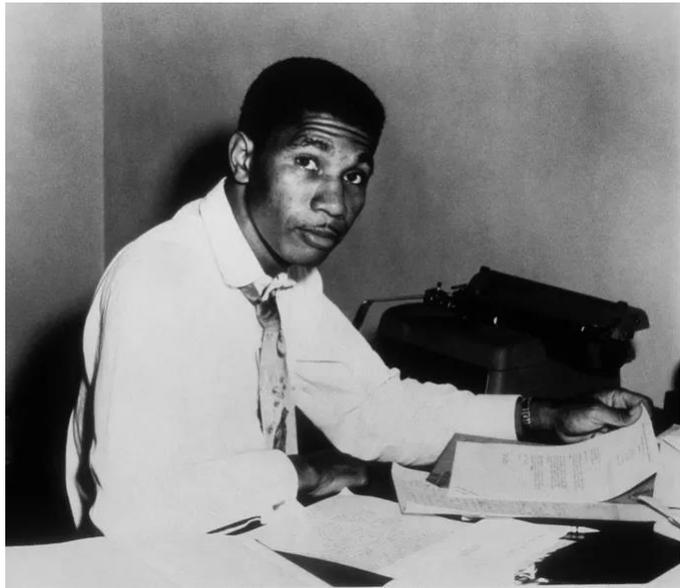
He was appointed as the first field secretary of the NAACP in Mississippi and actively led the organization in a variety of protests. That work earned him the enmity of white segregationists, particularly when he worked to establish local NAACP chapters, called for a new investigation of the lynching of Emmitt

Till and protested the conviction of Clyde Kennard, another civil rights activist in Mississippi. As a result, in 1963, Mr. Evers was almost run over, his garage was bombed, and he was later assassinated by Byron De La Beckwith, a member of the White Citizens' Commission. Mr. Evers was assassinated on June 12, 1963, two months before the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." Outrage over Mr. Evers' murder helped spur the passage of the Civil Rights Act, signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

Mr. De La Beckwith was twice tried and released after all-white juries deadlocked. A new investigation of the murder began in 1989 with the publication of a newspaper report on the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission. Mr. De La Beckwith was indicted in 1990 and finally retried in 1993. At the conclusion of this third trial, a racially mixed jury convicted him, then 70 years old, and he was sentenced to life in prison. This trial became the subject for the feature-length movie "Ghosts of Mississippi," released in 1996.

Highlights and Honors

- 1952: While working as an insurance salesman, also worked for the Regional Council of Leadership (RCNL), leading a boycott against gas stations that refused to allow Black people to use their bathrooms along with other local events.
- 1954: Applied to the University of Mississippi Law School, was rejected, and then volunteered to help the NAACP integrate the university. His rejection became a test case for the NAACP's later desegregation efforts, led by Thurgood Marshall, eventually resulting the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case that rejected the principle of "separate but equal" in education.
- 1954: Named as the first field secretary for the NAACP in Mississippi, a position he held until his death in 1963.
- Posthumous honors included:



- 1963: Awarded the NAACP's Springarn Medal, awarded annually for high achievement with the goals of calling attention to distinguished achievement among African Americans and stimulating the ambition of African American youth.
- 2069: The Medgar Evers College was founded as part of the City University of New York.
- 2011: The US Navy christened the USNS Medgar Evers, a Lewis and Clark class Dry Cargo/Ammunition Ship. Evers was a US Navy veteran who served in World War 2.
- 2017: Evers' home was designated a national historic landmark.

To learn more about Medgar Evers

Here are links to biographies from 3 different sources, all with slightly different perspectives on his life and work.

- *Biography.com*. The video includes a short (~4 m) biographical video. [Medgar Evers](#)
- *ThoughtCo*. [Biography of Medgar Evers](#)
- *TheFamousPeople*. <https://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/medgar-evers-4980.php>